

problem down to 1973; Cohen repeats the conviction, argued at length in his 1970 book *Israel and the Arab World* (London: J. W. Allen) that had it not been for malign British intervention the two peoples might have developed their 'common homeland' in fraternal co-operation, but goes on to criticize sharply intransigent Israeli attitudes of recent years. Campbell's survey, which stops short of the Kissinger era, is perhaps the most enlightening.

The Levy volume deals with the changed situation following the Yom Kippur War, but consists mostly of papers too cursory and often too inconclusive to leave much impression, save that 'risks' loom larger than 'opportunities'. Two longer contributions – Avner Yaniv on the policies of the EEC countries towards Israel since the upheavals of autumn 1973, and Avigdor Levy on 'The Changing Equation of the Arab-Israeli Conflict' – stand out, as does Arnon Gutfeld's cold-blooded dissection of United States policies. The symposium discussion reflects some apprehension that an imposed solution, entailing the sacrifice of vital Israeli interests, might be on the way. But most of this book leaves the reader with a feeling of deadening familiarity, which the frequent resort to heavy jargon does little to relieve.

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M. ABDEL-FADIL, *Development, Income Distribution and Social Change in Rural Egypt, 1952-1970* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975). Pp. xii + 157.

This book sets itself the ambitious task of analyzing and appraising the 'socio-economic transformations brought about in rural Egypt under Nasser's regime'. The author draws on a wide range of secondary-source statistical material to document his basic thesis: that the main effect of Egypt's agrarian policies over the period 1952-1970 was to weaken – and virtually eliminate – the class of large landowners, to improve the lot of small peasants slightly, but certainly to consolidate the position of the medium stratum which now represents the economic and political power in rural Egypt. The effect of these policies on the mobilization and transfer of the agricultural surplus is also analyzed.

The book does not live up to its title. It would have been essential for 'a study in the political economy of agrarian transition' to set current developments in their historical perspective by characterizing the type of agrarian structure and the new policies aimed at change, and by analyzing the 'dynamics' of transition from one stage of development to another. The author's four-page brief on the 'pre-reform agrarian system' (pp. 3-7) fails to do either.

The statistical bases on which many of the book's crucial conclusions are founded are extremely shaky. I mention only a few examples here. In his attempt to prove that agricultural real wages were falling, the author conveniently assumed a constant money wage rate of P.T. 11 per day over the period 1951-1959, for which he cites 'Mead, p. 313'¹ as his source (Tables 3-7, p. 66). Mead does not provide such data! Moreover, a recent study drawing on wage data published by the Ministry of Agriculture has shown that money wages were far from constant and real wages declined between 1951 and 1955, but then began to rise and continued to do so until 1966, when a slow but steady decline began.² Moreover, his estimate of 'the size of the pool of landless peasants' – crucial to his estimate of income distribution – was based on the erroneous assumption that the proportion of nonagricultural to total rural population was 19 per

¹ Donald C. Mead, *Growth and Structural Change in the Egyptian Economy* (Illinois, 1967).

² Samir Radwan, *The Impact of Agrarian Reform on Rural Egypt* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1976).

cent 'the ratio given in the 1960 census' (p. 44). Census data show that this ratio was only 7 per cent! According to the 1960 Population Census, the total rural population over six years of age was 13,072,236, of which 12,136,716 either were engaged in agriculture or were inactive, leaving 935,605 or exactly 7.2 per cent of the rural population engaged in nonagricultural activities. The result of this error is a gross underestimation in the number of landless in rural Egypt (30 per cent instead of 45 per cent in 1961). Much more serious perhaps is the error in Table 3.3 (p. 58), which contains the most crucial piece of statistical evidence in the whole book: distribution of agricultural income by socio-economic group. The author estimates the income of each ownership group by multiplying the area owned by that group by an estimate of 'average gross value added per feddan for different size farms,' for which he cites 'Mead, p. 67' as a reference. In fact, the figures in Mead refer to 'Gross Value of output/feddan' and not value added! Yet, multiplying these figures by the acreage in each size class, the author, for some unknown reason, arrives at 'net value added in agriculture.' Moreover, his estimates of income shares of various landholding classes, which miraculously add up to agricultural value added as reported by national accounts, are completely erroneous. After allocating income to ownership classes he attributes the difference between their combined share and total agricultural income to a separate category labeled 'rental payments for absentee landownership.' In doing so he seems to have forgotten that absentee owners were included in his estimate of income by ownership class. A simple addition of the number of families in various ownership brackets, which the author presents in the same table, would have shown that he has accounted for *all* landholders in Egypt, and that his estimates as they stand now contain grave double counting.

In view of the comments made above, one questions the validity of conclusions based on such erroneous estimates. Nor can one derive much comfort from the internal contradictions between text and evidence. While Table 3.3 shows that the average real income of a 'landless' household rose by 83 per cent between 1950 and 1961, that of the 'small' peasant by 15 per cent and that of the 'middle and rich' by 12 per cent, the author asserts that the middle and rich peasantry 'had the biggest rise in per capita income' (p. 60).

The effort, however, remains of interest as a collection of available data on a hitherto neglected subject and as a challenge to provoke more serious attempts.

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MARCEAU GAST and JEAN ADRIAN, *Mils et sorgho en Ahaggar: étude ethnologique et nutritionnelle*, Mémoires du centre de recherches anthropologiques préhistoriques et ethnographiques, Conseil de la recherche scientifique en Algérie, Vol. IV (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1965). Pp. 78+40 figures. Tables.

MARCEAU GAST, *Alimentation des populations de l'Ahaggar: étude ethnographique*, Mémoires du centre ... Vol. VIII (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1968). Pp. 457. Tables, illus.

MARCEAU GAST et al., *Le Lait et les produits laitiers en Ahaggar*, Mémoires du centre ... Vol XIV (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1969). Pp. 71. Tables, illus.

Food is at once the stuff from which our bodies and brains are made – often a very active stuff – and the bearer of a great range of meanings from human companionship to divine communion. Inability to go on eating in the familiar way because of increased population or degraded soil and vegetation, a problem that now afflicts much of